

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----069812 171507Z /41

P 171449Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5955

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 03041

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY VEST ONLY FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, GW, US
SUBJECT: PROPOSED STEPS TO EASE CURRENT FRG-US
DIFFICULTIES

REF: BONN 2946

1. YOU WILL HAVE NOTED FURTHER INDICATIONS OF GERMAN HIGH LEVEL CONCERN AT THE CURRENT TONE IN BILATERAL RELATIONS REPORTED REFTEL. FROM WHAT WE HAVE HEARD AND PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, IT WOULD SEEM THAT GENSCHER HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO THE DANGERS INVOLVED, PERHAPS BECAUSE OF FOREIGN OFFICE CONCERN. HE IS PROBABLY ALSO AWARE OF HOW MUCH OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM THE GERMANS HAVE BROUGHT ON THEMSELVES. IT WOULD SEEM NOW AS IF, PROBABLY UNDER THE IMPETUS OF GENSCHER'S THINKING, THERE HAS BEEN CABINET LEVEL DISCUSSION, A CONSENSUS HAS BEEN REACHED THAT INDEED THE TONE HAS NOT BEEN GOOD, AND THE DECISION TAKEN TO TRY TO RECTIFY MATTERS.

2. WE ARE THUS AT ONE OF THOSE DELICATE PASSAGES IN
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U.S.-GERMAN RELATIONS WHICH RECUR FROM TIME TO TIME. WITH HIGHEST LEVEL BILATERAL CONTACT OCCURRING FREQUENTLY IN THE MONTHS AHEAD, THERE IS EVERY REASON FOR CONCERN AND AN EFFORT ON BOTH SIDES TO RESTORE BALANCE AND CREATE THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS AND PROPER ATMOSPHERE FOR REASONABLE DISCOURSE.

3. WE SHOULD NOT, HOWEVER, BE UNDER ANY ILLUSIONS THAT THE REALIZATION ON SCHMIDT'S PART OF THE NEED TO WORK FOR BETTER BILATERAL TONE WILL MEAN ANY MARKED SHIFTS IN THE CHANCELLOR'S VIEWS ON THE RANGE OF KEY ISSUES CONFRONTING US, NOTABLY SECURITY AND ECONOMIC MATTERS. NOR CAN WE CHANGE OUR POSITIONS ON MANY KEY ISSUES. THIS BEING THE CASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER IRRITATIONS WILL REMAIN. IN ADDITION IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO REVERSE IMMEDIATELY NEGATIVE ATMOSPHERIC TRENDS IN THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP EVEN IF SCHMIDT HAS RESOLVED TO DO SO. IT IS NOT A MATTER OF SIMPLY TURNING OFF THE SPIGOT. THE QUESTION FOR US IS HOW TO ACT UPON THE RECENT INDICATIONS OF GERMAN CONCERN IN THE MOST POSITIVE WAY, AS THEY APPEAR TO BE ACTING.

4. WE SUGGESTED IN REFTEL THE POSSIBILITY OF A HIGH LEVEL INTERVIEW OR BACKGROUNDER WITH THEO SOMMER. WE THINK SOMMER'S IDEA A GOOD ONE AND SUPPORT IT WITHOUT RESERVATION, BUT CLEARLY MORE IS NEEDED. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD CONSIDER CAREFULLY A SPECIAL EFFORT TO COMMUNICATE WITH GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION AND THE MEDIA THROUGHOUT THE MONTHS AHEAD, THAT IS THROUGH THE NATO SUMMIT TO THE ECONOMIC SUMMIT AND THE PRESIDENT'S BILATERAL VISIT. YOU MAY WISH TO CONSIDER IN THIS

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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 03041

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CONNECTION ARRANGING FOR MORE HIGH LEVEL BACKGROUNDING WITH GERMAN MEDIA PEOPLE IN THE U.S. ANOTHER SPECIFIC POSSIBILITY, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD BE AN INTERVIEW BY THE SECRETARY WITH BILGIS, A JOURNALIST WHOSE INTEREST IN SUCH AN INTERVIEW THE FRG FOREIGN OFFICE SUPPORTED LAST YEAR (BONN'S 8430, MAY 16, 1977).

5. WHAT WE SHOULD STRIVE FOR BASICALLY IS A POSITIVE PROJECTION OF THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. WE WOULD WANT TO REMAIN REALISTIC AND NOT SKIMP OR UNDERESTIMATE PROBLEMS, BUT THE MAIN NOTE WOULD BE THE OVERALL STRENGTH OF OUR RELATIONS AS WELL AS THEIR IMPORTANCE TO BOTH STATES. THERE WOULD BE NO POINT IN GETTING INTO WHO STRUCK JOHN OR SPECIFIC EXCHANGES ON MACRO-ECONOMICS, FOR INSTANCE. RATHER, WE WOULD WANT TO RECORD CLEARLY THAT WE ARE ON MUCH HIGHER GROUND IN OUR VIEW OF THE OVERRIDING NATURE OF THE ISSUES THAT JOIN THE TWO COUNTRIES TOGETHER IN FRUITFUL MUTUAL EFFORT. WE WOULD DO IT WITHOUT SELF-DEPRECIATION OR APOLOGY, BUT WITH A STRESS ON SHARED PURPOSES.

6. I HOPE YOU WILL FIND IT POSSIBLE TO ACCEPT SOME OF THE IDEAS AND APPROACHES WE HAVE SUGGESTED. I BELIEVE THE GERMANS WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO BROAD STATEMENTS OF OUR CONTINUING INTEREST IN OUR

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RELATIONSHIP. GIVEN THE INTENSE HIGH LEVEL BILATERAL CLIMATE OF THE COMING MONTHS, SUCH AN EFFORT TO GENERATE POSITIVE ATMOSPHERICS WOULD SEEM TO BE WORTH CONSIDERING.
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